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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Carol Farley, age 19, History Major at Oberlin College,
from Evanston, Illinois

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: the second floor dining room at the home of the interviewee,
779 Twelfth Ave., San Francisco, California

Date: January 18, 1973

Time: 1:30 PM - forty minutes recording time
Only the interviewee and interviewer were present

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

Prior to the interview, Mrs. Flick had been sent a list of questions to give her an idea of the sort of topics the interview would cover. The interviewer and Mrs. Flick went over these questions briefly immediately before the interview. The interview covered most of the original questions and some others which arose during the course of the interview. There were two brief interruptions, one when the doorbell rang, and the other when Mrs. Flick left for a moment to attend to her mother, who lives at the house.

EDITING:

Preliminary editing was done by the interviewer within a month of interview. This was limited to striking out incipient sentences and a few superfluous words such as "so" and "and" where their use encumbered the narrative, and occasional rewording for clarity. An exact transcript of the original interview is on file in the Manuscript Librarian's office. The tape is also available.

Farley: Before we begin our discussion of your career in the League of Women Voters, Mrs. Flick, perhaps you'd be willing to tell us something about your education and family background, and what interested you in the League.

Flick: Yes. I was born in San Francisco. My great-grandfather came around the Horn in 1848. I was educated in public grammar school in San Francisco and attended the Sacred Heart Convent in The City and at Menlo Park and received my A.B. from the University of California at Berkeley. It was the only University of California then--we called UCLA the southern branch. And I received my secondary certificate the following year and then taught for five years in Alameda High School. I majored in English, but minored in Political Science, and I've always been interested in government. As a little girl I followed the Suffragette Movement with interest and used to pretend to be Susan B. Anthony [1820-1906] and made up skits about her.

Farley: Was your interest in the League then very much tied up with your interest in the feminist movement?

Flick: Yes it was. I first heard about the League itself when I was in college and the president of what was then the San Francisco Center, now the League, Miss Ruth Turner, spoke to the Honor Society of the Mortar Board in my senior year in 1927 or '28. This was the first time that I had heard about the League.

Farley: What particular things about her speech impressed you?

Flick: Oh, I don't really remember. It was quite a while ago. I think she spoke about the purpose of the organization and its activities.

Farley: Did you become active in the League soon after this time?

Flick: Not so soon after, I'm afraid. I was teaching and also was involved in various other organizations at that time. I did join the League in 1938, was a member of the board in '39, and then became president of the League in 1940.

Farley: During your year as a board member you were in charge of a program called "The ABC's of City Government." Did you feel that this and other programs such as the Voters' Information Bureau were successful?

Flick: Yes, they were highly successful. We had five meetings in which we studied City departments and aspects of the charter, and we had the heads of different departments talk to us. Then we had at least five field trips where we visited the City Hall and most of the Commissions and of course the General Hospital and the Jail.

Farley: Was the response of the government officials quite favorable to this?

Flick: Oh, highly so. They love nothing better than to justify their work. (laughter)

Farley: Did many such people as yourselves visit the agencies?

Flick: Not very many. The League is the group that has always shown the most interest in government, and we've always been very well received because they know that we are not supporting individual candidates, but are truly working without any axe to grind except for the general welfare, which is rather unusual.

Farley: Yes, I would say that is quite unusual. Did this non-partisan aspect cause any controversy during your year of presidency?

Flick: Well, sometimes it did, of course. One meeting we had Henry Wallace [1888-], who was running for Presidency that year, speak. Four hundred attended, and of course there wasn't any controversy about it as long as we had a Republican of nearly equal status, so we then asked Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, the son of Teddy Roosevelt, to speak, and that was fine. But we had to be equal. If we had a Democrat we had to have a Republican, and vice versa.

Farley: Could you describe more fully the work as a board member that you went through in presenting the issues?

Flick: Yes. We always studied for a year, sometimes for two years, and of course the fact is, the way things are moving these days, that often isn't enough time, so sometimes we do a mini-study of several weeks on a subject we've studied before to bring us up to date.

Then we must have the consensus, more than a majority, of our members agreeing that we are ready to take action on the subject. If it is a local subject within our program, or on our continuing responsibilities, we can then take action by a vote of our own League. If it's a state matter, the state has to have a majority of the Leagues in the state agree, and if it's national, a majority of the Leagues in the United States have to agree. So it requires a great deal of preparation, and then once we have agreed about something, we put it on continuing responsibilities so that if it comes up nationally, locally, or on a state basis we can speak before the Legislature or whatever body is concerned. At each convention--they are always annual--we review our own local responsibilities, and the same is done at the state convention every two years, and the national every two years. We see which ones need reviewing, which ones should be continued, and which ones should be eliminated.

Farley: Your interest seemed to be in city government and the local issues more than the national. Is that correct?

Flick: No, that isn't really. My interest really began on the national level. I was fortunate enough to attend as a visitor the Democratic National Convention of 1932 at which President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was first nominated. I really had more interest on the national level, but I also developed a great interest on the local level. I realized that more people had an interest on the national level, and actually the local level--the city and state governments--affect

us more, at least they did thirty-two years ago. Possibly the federal is affecting us more now--our individual lives.

But the League in my day was a peculiar organization because it had a dual personality. We had ten local study items in those days--they're limited now--and then we had several state items and several national, and we called them study groups. They now call them workshops, but they're the same. And in addition to all this League work, and having speakers on our League subjects and so on, and doing our research, we also continued to run the San Francisco Center.

Farley: Were those two separate organizations?

Flick: Well no, they were together. We were the San Francisco Center of the California League of Women Voters. We were unique in that respect. Just as San Francisco is the only city in the United States which is also a county, we were the only League that was a Center as well as a League, and because the Center had existed for ten years before the League of Women Voters was organized, as one of our members said, the San Francisco Center went into the League of Women Voters "trailing clouds of glory." It was formed by the women who had worked for the vote which was granted to California women in 1911. Of course they could vote only in the state and so the Center worked on the local and state levels.

We joined with other Centers. However we were the only one that remained a Center when we joined the League of Women Voters.

We had had not only political issues but other issues. It was the Center that formed the Public Dance Hall Committee, and the League continued to supervise that until it was taken over by the City. We also were a forum, and every week there would be a speaker. It might be on a League subject, or it might be on a general subject, and we had at least one large luncheon every month and sometimes two.

Farley: The speakers that you were able to attract were always very distinguished, and I take it the San Francisco Center began as a rather small group. Did either the League or the Center have an elitist or "clubby" connotation?

Flick: Well, the Center may have had an elitist connotation, although it had many more members than the League itself ever had--it had several thousand, almost two thousand to begin with. The League went down to a thousand, and I think it tries to maintain a thousand now. I'm not sure how many exactly at the present time. The Center was very popular because it had all these distinguished speakers, and I would say that perhaps the Center was considered elite, but still its membership was open to any woman just as it is in the League. When it joined the League it had to follow League policies in any case, so it was really a democratic organization. The League requires no recommendations for membership--any woman is eligible to join, and we've had a few men who've insisted on belonging.

Farley: Oh, really? (laughter) Could you tell us more about them?

Flick: (laughter) Well, there was one man who insisted on joining--we could hardly refuse him. He used to come to meetings--he was a bit of a pest. We ourselves made the eminent journalist of the past, Chester Rowell [1868-1948] an honorary member because he gave us so much assistance.

Farley: What was the reaction of the women to a man wanting to join their women's League?

Flick: Well, some of them objected and some did not. But it was a little bit of the Women's Lib Movement in reverse on the part of a man or two in the past. He was interested in belonging, but that wasn't too much of a problem. ~~Portuguese~~

For years we ran this double program, having an open forum and luncheon and a certain social aspect, and then doing the serious League work--keeping our full membership in the League and our full activities.

Farley: And your studies.

Flick: Oh yes! We had to belong to the California League and the National League. We have a fourth level these days of course--the regional level--(laughter) the San Francisco Bay Area League. So we have studies now on the local level for San Francisco, the Bay Area for

the nine Bay Area counties, the State, and the National.

Farley: The amount of work needed to be done interested me. It occurred to me that only a woman of considerable leisure or leisure time would be able to do the amount of work. Was that true?

Flick: Oh, that was true. I didn't have any children when I was first married, or otherwise I never could have done it, and those who did have children had help in those days. It isn't quite so bad these days since the Center work has been eliminated, but it still takes a great deal of time if you are very active in it, and I know one woman in the past who developed a nervous breakdown working so hard for the League, but that was only one case.

We had these luncheons, you see, and we had as I said, four hundred for Henry Wallace, and over two hundred for Colonel Roosevelt, and we never had fewer than a hundred, and we sat every person down by name--imagine doing that. We had only one executive secretary to do it. All the other work was voluntary.

Farley: How did World War II, when many women were going back to work, affect the size of your membership or the kind of people involved in the League?

Flick: Of course that was beyond my administration. I was president from April 1940 'til April 1941, and the United States did not go into war until the end of '41.

Farley: You were still on the board though, weren't you?

Flick: I was on the board, and of course it affected us greatly because many members did go into voluntary war work, and we lost quite a few members for various reasons. Some of their husbands were transferred and so on, and it was soon after that that we gave up the Center part and just became the San Francisco League of Women Voters.

Farley: When Mrs. [Harriet] Eliel became president [1942-1944] during the war years, she mentioned that the relocation of population and the fact that many Japanese-American citizens had been relocated, placed an additional responsibility on the voters. Did you find that people were more interested in your activities than usual because of the war?

Flick: Actually, it didn't work that way. (laughter)

Farley: The contrary?

Flick: Yes, it seems to me it was the contrary because they were so engaged in the war and they were hesitant to say anything critical of the government because of the war, so that there was really less of that than before or after.

Farley: Did you have many Japanese-American citizens as members of the League?

Flick: No. I don't know that we had even one then.

Farley: That seems strange in a way, but perhaps they were involved in other organizations.

Flick: Yes--well they were really a small group comparatively, and not a wealthy group, and we've made great efforts since the war to have minorities come in, but they've come in in very small numbers for various reasons--so many of them work, so many of them have their own close interests and organizations--but we always have been open to them.

Farley: How do you feel the fact that you're a women's organization has affected the reaction of the public and the press to your activities?

Flick: Well, I think they've been very favorable. Some of the public likes us and some do not, but I must say that the governmental officials from Congress down have always treated us with the greatest respect and courtesy because they know that we do not support anything which we have not studied and that we are not partisan, and that we are not lobbying for any selfish interest. Therefore we have received the greatest respect from all governmental officials and from the press--in proportion out of our numbers I think.

Farley: That's the impression I've had from the papers. When you were president, who were the people that you worked most closely with?

Flick: Well, naturally with some of them according to the office. Mrs. Allen Scott was the Vice-President, and she was a most helpful, active Vice-President. Mrs. Arlington C. White was the Program Chairman and we three worked closely on the programs, the speakers, and setting up the study groups and so on. Of course we had to follow the directives from the state and national. For our local study group we, the board, would make recommendations and present them to the members, and the members could make their recommendations, and then we'd vote at the annual meeting. Oh, we always went through democratic procedures.

Then there was Mrs. Alexander Faverman who was Treasurer and later was on the Program Committee, and Mrs. Byron Bryant who was on the Program Committee, and Mrs. Richard Elkus. Others who did not devote quite so much time but who were very helpful and with whom we were extremely congenial were Mrs. Edmund Gerald Brown, Mrs. William Lister Rogers, Mrs. Edward Matzger, Mrs. Jack Abrahamson, and Mrs. Frank Gerbode. We were all about the same age. We were young then--we were in the very early thirties.

Farley: Yes. One of the articles that I read stressed the fact that when you became president, you were quite young for this position.

Flick: Yes. I was thirty-three. I didn't think I was so young at the time, but I realize now I was. (laughter)

Farley: How do you account for the fact that you were able to, after such

a short time of involvement in the League, come to the presidency so rapidly?

Flick: Well, possibly they had a difficult time persuading anybody else.
(laughter)

Farley: It's a lot of work!

Flick: It was a tremendous amount of work, but I did have these wonderful people who helped me too, and it was extremely interesting. That year perhaps was one of the very first, if not the first study on city planning and that was important in the League program. Mrs. Morse Erskine, the great conservationist, was chairman of that program.

We also introduced a civil rights program, and although we really were just studying the Bill of Rights, some people looked on it as quite radical. Sometimes we combined the Center with the League aspect of work, and so we invited Theodore Dreiser [1871-1945] to address us on civil rights. That was really a most amusing episode. If anyone asked me what I thought was my greatest personal accomplishment while I was president, I would say that it was inducing Theodore Dreiser to eat one lamb chop. Mrs. Faverman had secured his appearance through a friend who knew him very well, and of course he was the great realistic novelist of earlier years and supposedly working very hard for civil liberties. He was seventy-two at the time, and he was going to speak for the Civil Liberties Congress

the two nights before he addressed us. The Civil Liberties Congress was later ruled as a subversive organization--not the Civil Liberties Union which is still going very well--and so it was delicate ground. However, our entire board voted to have Theodore Dreiser speak to us. However, we knew that if anything went wrong, Mrs. Faverman and I would have the whole blame--I as president, and she as having secured him for the program. We had a hundred twenty-five reservations for the luncheon to take place on a Monday in December of 1940.

He had spoken to the Civil Liberties Congress on Saturday night. Sunday morning at seven I received a telegram from one of our most conservative members who had heard him speak at the Civil Liberties Congress, and she said, "You'll have to cancel him. He's impossible." Then a little later on one of our most liberal members telephoned me and said, "I don't see how you can have him. He's impossible. He had been drinking too much, and he used bad language, and he didn't really speak well on civil liberties. He just insulted people who had a little money or this or that."

So, I decided that if we did cancel it, we would have to pay for the whole luncheon and so the show should go on. So they agreed that we would have him, but I sent Mrs. Faverman over to his hotel to keep him sober at ten in the morning and to tell him what we would like to hear. (laughter)

He appeared not a little bit in awe--of course having heard this--and he was about thirty years older than I and a distinguished author. But the minute he came in I wasn't afraid anymore. He had with him a respectable-looking woman in her forties, and instead of saying,

"May she have luncheon with us?" he said, "If she doesn't eat, I don't talk!" (laughter) And then I became perfectly relaxed because he sounded to me just like one of my former adolescent students, then I was in command of the situation in trying to guide him. I said, "Of course she will have luncheon with us." Then our poor, harassed executive secretary said, "We can't possibly put her at the speaker's table. I figure we'll just put her in anywhere--wherever there's a cancellation." So that worked all right. Well then we were seated and Mr. Dreiser said that he wanted a drink. Well, it's impossible to convey to this generation how non-drinking we were just thirty-two years ago. No women had a social hour before their meetings in those days, and maybe you'd have a glass of sherry, but you would never drink in the hotel before lunch. So those of us on either side of him said, "Oh no, Mr. Dreiser." And especially we didn't want him to have anything to drink because it would affect him as it had two nights before. So we said, "We will take you to the bar immediately after." He said, "No, I want it now," and so he just ordered it from the waiter and then he ordered another one. Then he wasn't going to eat anything. (laughter) So I induced him to eat a lamb chop--and that was great--and I tried to talk to him about what he should say to us. Well, he got up, and he didn't really talk about civil liberties, but he used good language, and he was not insulting, and so it went off fairly well. At the end of the talk, one of our middle-aged, matronly women rose and said, "Mr. Dreiser, what did you mean when you referred to the difference between

men and women?" and he said, "My dear madame, if at your age you don't know it, I'm not going to inform you." (laughter)

Incidentally, the luncheon consisted of anchovy salad, two grilled lamb chops, potatoes, vegetables, parfait and pettifoires, coffee and rolls, and cost each member a dollar and a quarter. We paid the hotel a dollar, and the quarter paid our expenses.

Farley: Your expenses for the speaker?

Flick: No. We didn't pay the speaker. Our expenses for the speaker's lunch, for the flowers, and for the notices.

(end side one)

Farley: Let's resume our conversation with a discussion of your board members. I understand that the husband of Mrs. Edmund Gerald Brown, who was on the board, later became governor.

Flick: Yes. Well, at the time he was elected to be District Attorney for San Francisco, and later he was Attorney General for the state, and then much later Governor. But when he was elected governor, one of the first things that Mrs. Brown did was to invite the San Francisco League members to the Governor's mansion for a tour and tea. She was always a loyal League member, and when her husband was running for office she remained objective according to League policy--didn't campaign for him, even among us. (laughter)

Farley: My, that's quite an accomplishment!

Flick: Yes. And incidentally, this shows how much some public officials thought of us. In the early forties, the Federal Courts admitted women on juries for the first time. Mrs. Gerbode was the first woman, and the presiding judge at the time took his list of recommendations for women only from the League of Women Voters. I was on the second panel, the next year, along with two other League members.

Farley: There were a number of projects of particular interest to women such as the Women's Court, and the Policewomen's Bureau. Do you feel that you placed great emphasis on programs of particular interest to women?

Flick: Not solely, no. Most of our programs were of interest to men, women, and children.

Farley: And working women as well?

Flick: Oh yes. Yes indeed. We didn't concentrate just on women, no. Only when an injustice might occur, as when women were not serving on juries and so on.

Farley: Did you have many professional women amongst you?

Flick: We had possibly several doctors and lawyers who could spare some time

but not very many because most of our meetings were in the daytime, and any intensive study took a great deal of leisure time.

Flick: How was the year that you were president? You mentioned you had no children that year. Did you feel that many women made the League activities the center of their lives?

Flick: No, not so many. If you were in office, it almost had to be the center of your life for that year, but for those who were not officers of the League, of course, more time was available, and some even had other organizations. Mrs. Scott, at the same time that she was Vice-President of the League of Women Voters, was also Vice-President of the YWCA, and she found that very strenuous.
(laughter)

Farley: You must have found your year quite strenuous.

Flick: It was extremely strenuous. It was about a sixteen-hour-a day job. And I found out that when you're a voluntary worker, people do not respect your hours at all. They'd call you, as I said, probably at seven in the morning, and they would call you at eleven at night. But later when I went back to teaching for several years at Miss Burke's school, people were so thoughtful when I was being paid a salary and a professional worker. They would never call me after dinner. (laughter)

Farley: The status of volunteers is up for quite a bit of controversy now. I understand that some people in San Francisco are drawing up a list of rights for volunteer workers. Was most of the League work voluntary at that time?

Flick: It was entirely so.

Farley: How did this affect the members?

Flick: Well, they were interested in what they were doing and they did it generously. During the Depression it wasn't thought to be kind or generous to hold a job that you didn't really need for a living. That was one reason I gave up my teaching job when I married in January 1934, because I was depriving others of a livelihood and I'd be keeping a job just for the extra money because my husband was fully employed.

Farley: Do you feel that this accounted for a lot of people joining the League or becoming in it during the Depression?

Flick: Yes. Well, they were people who liked to do something, there weren't so many people working then, but there were many women who still wanted some interesting work in addition to running their houses.

Farley: Had many of the women had a great deal of training, or did the

League take ~~the~~ responsibility of educating people in civics and government?

Flick: Well, the League did do that. However, the League is peculiar in its membership. It requires no recommendations and it has no prerequisites for taking any courses or doing any work, but the very nature of its purpose and its service rather screens the members, so that with rare exceptions you have people of rather good education and real interest in government. There are a few exceptions. Of course when we had the Center, we had what one of our members used to call "the fringe members." That is, they didn't care so much about the League work or the hard work, but they liked to come to the Center talks and the Center luncheons. (laughter)

Farley: This is what I was wondering when I asked earlier about the elite or clubby aspects. The Center programs could be very entertaining.

Flick: Yes, they were very entertaining. (Pause while Mrs. Flick goes upstairs to attend to her ninety-one-year-old mother, who lives at the house.)

Flick: (resuming) When I began to teach in 1929, there were ten thousand teachers with certificates and without jobs in the state of California. That continued until just before the Second World War and the Depression, and then as soon as the war began, there were ten thousand teachers without certificates teaching because of the influx

of people and the fact that so many teachers, both men and women, went into war work and armed services and so on.

Farley: Did you resume your teaching after your involvement in the League?

Flick: Just on a very small scale. I was asked to go back to teaching by the principal of Lowell High School here, but I didn't feel that I could take a full-time job, but I did do some tutoring to help out. I did go back in the 'fifties because my husband had to face retirement. We adopted two children after we were married twelve years, so we had to think of their education. So I went back to Miss Burke's School and taught English--everything from Beowulf to the Beatniks--for several years, but when my husband had to retire from Standard Oil, he found a position with the United State Navy, so then I gave up teaching.

Farley: What was your husband's and others' reaction to the tremendous amount of work that you were putting into the League?

Flick: My husband really didn't like it so much, but he was quite forbearing. My daughter has a prejudice against the League and my son loves it and went into politics himself for a while. In high school he volunteered in several political campaigns, and he spent two and a half years in Washington on Senator [Thomas] Kuchel's staff until the Senator was defeated.

Farley: Do you think this was a response to your own interests?

Flick: Yes it was, because he was exposed to it as a child, and my daughter was also exposed, but when it comes to environment, there are other factors besides just the exposure--you have something in you that responds to it and some have it and some don't.

Farley: Do you see your League involvement as a chapter in your life, or have you continued your interests?

Flick: The League to me is, although not on quite the same scale, like my Religion and my Literature. It's a continuing interest in my life. The League is the one organization that any woman can find interest in from eighteen to ninety-eight. Other organizations come and go, like parent-teacher groups and hospitality centers and so on. You do them at different times and at different ages, but the League is good for a life-time.

Farley: Are you still actively involved in it?

Flick: Well, not so actively, but I do have meetings at my home--I'm the hostess--and even in the unit meetings it's of great interest to see that among perhaps twenty-five people, we'll have every decade and age represented--sometimes not anybody in the twenties. They find it hard to come to League meetings, but there are some from the thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, and even up to the eighties--and all together and all discussing the same subject. Now there're not many organizations where you can find that. There's too much segregation of age

those days I think.

Farley: I would agree. (laughter) Do you find that this wide spread in ages is quite an advantage in working on your studies?

Flick: Yes it is, because the older people have experience the younger ones haven't, and the younger ones have a fresh point of view and a little more energy sometimes and more spirit of adventure than some of the old ones, so they're a good combination together.

Farley: You mentioned the year you were president it was a relatively young board, but was this always the case, or was that rare?

Flick: It was fairly rare. It was always somewhat difficult to enlist young members because of their responsibilities, but there were enough older members to keep us in line so that we didn't do anything far out. We used to call them "the keepers of the Center." (laughter) If we tried to do anything that was too much, then the League lost. (laughter) But that of course changed. Even without the war, we probably would have had to give up the Center programs because Town Hall came along paying speakers two hundred and fifty dollars, so we could no longer secure the distinguished speakers for nothing as we had before.

Farley: I understand that you have an interest in parliamentarianism. Could you tell us something about that?

Flick: Well, I took my first course in parliamentary procedure from Mrs. Simon the first year that I got onto the League of Women Voters, and that gave me an interest in it, and the interest rather grew. Then I belonged to the National Association of Parliamentarians, but I resigned from that when the National refused to accept a Negro member we had voted for on the local level. I now belong to the National Institute of Parliamentarians, and I've been parliamentarian at several conventions here for the League of Women Voters of San Francisco and other organizations.

Farley: Can you tell us something about this incident of the Negro joining and the controversy that caused?

Flick: Yes, well of course this wasn't the League. This was the California Association of Parliamentarians here, and there was a most distinguished Negro woman who had received an award from the President for all the war bonds she had sold during the war. She was a resident of this neighborhood and had lived here--owned her home for twenty years. Lovely woman.

Farley: Do you recall her name?

Flick: Yes, Willa Evans. We had two local groups here and she joined one and was fully qualified to belong as well as any of the others. The stated purpose of the organization was to extend the knowledge of

parliamentary procedure and so on and we expected them to do it. Well, they discovered that she was a Negro because she wrote down that she belonged to LINKS and a few other things. The officers at the time were Southerners--this was I guess early in the 'fifties--and they temporized at first--they didn't accept her. Then they said she had to fulfill further qualifications. Well, that wasn't right because they weren't required at the time, but she did anyway, and still they didn't take her. We wrote wonderful letters, and we didn't give up. We didn't resign in a huff, two of us. We struggled for two years, and at the convention it was a tie about whether to accept her or not. So then two of us resigned. We didn't feel that it was sensible to be giving money for civil rights groups and then belong to a group that wouldn't accept a member who was distinguished. (laughter) But of course matters have improved very much in most groups about Negro membership. Over the years there's been tremendous improvement.

San Francisco was in a unique position because before the Second World War there were only two thousand Negroes in all of San Francisco. And then because of the ship-building, the Navy just brought in field-workers and Negroes from all over the country, you see, and it was very difficult to assimilate them. Oh, and of course another factor in the Depression was that, in regard to the National Convention of 1940, we found that California was quite different in other ways. We were one of the few states that wanted federal aid to education. Most of the others still had that states' rights

idea, you see. The reason that we favored federal aid was that we had this tremendous influx of Dust Bowl immigrants, and it was a burden on the Board of Education to try to support them all, and we wanted some federal funds for the migratory workers who moved from county to county. Incidentally, there's a joke that's typical of the period. The puzzle in the 'thirties that was asked was: "What three states has the United States lost?" and the answer was: "Arkansas and Oklahoma have moved to California and California's gone to Hell." (laughter) But in a generation most of the people were assimilated--many that weren't even born then and others who've almost forgotten--but it was a difficult time for a decade when those poor Dust Bowl workers came.

Farley: You were a delegate to the 1940 Convention of the League of Women Voters--is that correct?

Flick: That's the one I'm speaking of. Yes.

Farley: Did you feel the National League was a very much eastern-dominated organization, and that you were rare coming from California?

Flick: No. I can't say that we felt that way. In those days California was farther away than it is now because we had to travel by train for several days, but they had many members from the Middle West. Of course there were more on the board from the East, because it was more convenient for them to be in Washington more often, but every state had

its opportunity.

Farley: Can you tell us something of the interesting features of that convention or your particular involvement in it?

Flick: Well, as I said, we were interested in having the League support federal aid to education, but many of the states were not. But it was a tremendously educational and inspiring event to attend. It was held at the Commodore Hotel and Miss Anna Lord Strauss spoke. Later she was active traveling for our government in Japan and war-torn countries with the President to see what rehabilitation could be made, and she was most distinguished. It was a rare treat just to sit and listen to the delegates. At first they were limited to five minutes in presenting their arguments, and then it was reduced to three minutes, and what those women could say in three minutes was simply remarkable. In addition to the program of work and all the arguments about supporting certain programs and not others, they also had a wonderful program for us. Nelson Rockefeller, Jr. gave us a private party at the then-quite-new Museum of Modern Art. And at our banquet Mrs. Roosevelt was one of the guests of honor, and Governor [Herbert] Lehman's wife.

Farley: Was Eleanor Roosevelt much admired by most League members?

Flick: Oh, indeed she was, and she was a delightful person to converse with. She was even better in conversation than as a public speaker.

Farley: Did you have an opportunity to meet her?

Flick: Yes, I did. I met her personally and chatted with her, and years later I met her for almost two hours in a little committee of the United Nations Association--she was a delegate. After President Roosevelt died, she worked very hard. She traveled around the whole country visiting United Nations Associations. That was another interest of mine. I'd always, when I was very young, supported the League of Nations and worked for that too. Before the United Nations was convened here--the meeting for it and the plans were made--the League of Women Voters had an educational project on that too. That was throughout the country and our local League trained speakers and we went to every PTA in the city and spoke about it. (barking of dog and doorbell interrupt and there is a brief pause while Mrs. Flick answers the door and shows the visitor upstairs.)

(resuming) In 1940 we worked closely with the Commonwealth Club on some programs and also with the YWCA in helping refugees from Hitler. The three organizations sponsored a party one evening for these refugees and the League talked about its program and the Commonwealth about its club and so on, and there my husband and I met this couple. She was from Berlin and her parents had been killed in a concentration camp. Her brother had gone earlier to Palestine. And her husband was from Vienna. They had managed to escape to England--they had met in a concentration camp--and they were then married. They were released from England when they had been screened and they

came to San Francisco. I happened to give them a copy of the Beards' History of American Civilization, a book about which I have some reservations, but it was a good summary for them. They thought it was such a lovely gift that we've been life-long friends ever since. Unfortunately her husband, as soon as he was a citizen, enlisted in our army and acted as an interpreter in Germany. Just as the war was over, he and a superior officer were walking in Berlin and they were killed by snipers. But the League gave refugees instructions in government and helped them prepare for their examination by the Voter's Information and so on. Our Voter's Handbook was used by refugees and immigrants, and we were often asked by other groups such as the International Institute, which helped foreigners, to send a speaker on government. I remember one time having a very difficult assignment. It was quite a few years ago when the differences were not so apparent as they are now--even though they're not too apparent at present, I was asked to tell the difference between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Quite an assignment.

Earley: Can you tell us something about Mr. Flick?

Flick: He was born in West Virginia and grew up in Virginia, but his mother's family were from New England. He came to California when he was eighteen. His first year of college was at William and Mary and he finished at the University of California, but he's ten years older than I so our paths didn't cross 'til (laughter) some years later. When he graduated from college, he was sent to Shanghai by Haskins and Sells, an accounting firm, and then he returned and spent some time

in San Diego. He later became an internal officer for Standard Oil and is now, in retirement, a full-time paid auditor for the United States Navy and was sent, at the age of seventy-five, to computer science school in Virginia this spring. That's an unusual record.

Farley: It certainly is.

Flick: His chief hobby, as you can guess, (the Flick's home boasts a fine library) is collecting books, but he also collects records and china and prints. It would be a virtue in a wealthy person, but it's a vice in one who isn't wealthy. (laughter)

Farley: Do you share these interests?

Flick: Oh yes, I share the interest, but I'm perfectly happy to get a book out of the library occasionally. I don't feel I have to own every book that I read, but as far as he's concerned, one would think libraries didn't exist. (laughter) So sometimes I think of forming a "Book Collectors Anonymous," or writing a book about being the wife of a bibliomaniac.

Farley: What are your current public interests?

Flick: At present I'm parliamentarian for the Associated Alumnae of the Sacred Heart. That's all the alumnae of the United States and Canada, and we're having our convention in April at the Palace Hotel, and we're giving our Distinguished Alumna Award this year to Sister Miriam O'Gara

of the Holy Family Convent. The Holy Family Sisters were founded in San Francisco one hundred years ago to do social service among the women and children, and Sister Miriam was the first to bring any religious instruction to the retarded. She has done remarkable work. She has set up two homes, one for retarded girls and one for retarded boys, who do not have parents. She has received an award from the Kennedy Foundation. It was really Sister Miriam's idea to set up the Holy Family Guild to assist the religions of the Holy Family in their various convents, but I organized this group and set it up and we now have auxiliaries in the western states wherever they are. And we've collected--Oh I think--more than half a million dollars for them in the time we've been organized as well as doing other work.

Farley: You've had quite a strong interest in the Catholic Church then?

Flick: Yes, I have, and sometimes I was the liaison, or they looked on me as such, between the Catholic Church and other organizations before this ecumenism came along, and we don't really need it so much anymore. The Catholic point of view would have to be explained, and there were so few Catholic members in the League because I suppose they were busy doing their own. But it was too bad for I was always having to explain the point of view of the Catholic Church although I was very glad to do so. That's one great thing about the League. Most of the members can discuss any controversial subject with light and without heat, and it was one of the few places where you could go on election day and meet members supporting opposite candidates and have a quiet discussion about their respective merits.